





Psalm. lvi. in titulo, ita et *μάκρυμμα* deduxerunt: quan-
vocem, opinor, certe expositionem ejus, frustra apud
veteres Græcae linguae scriptores quaeras.

Cum igitur LXXviralis Versio ad Hebraicam veri-
tatem probe perspiciendam, ad auctoritatem testimo-
niorum Apostolicorum confirmandam, ad nativum
Novi Fœderis stylum recte intelligendum, ad Græcos
Latinosque Patres rite tractandos, ad scientiam deni-
que linguae Græcae ipsamque criticen adornandam,
tam sit utilis atque necessaria, quis eam doctis omni-
bus, præsertim theologis, non videt debere esse com-
mendatissimam?

Quoniam autem hæc Seniorum versio, etiam S. Hiero-
ronymi tempore, “corrupta fuit atque violata,” danda
est opera, ut ei pristina puritas restitui et redintegrari
possit. Certum est exemplaria quæ habemus, Com-
plutense, Aldinum, Romanum, plurimum inter se et
ab Alexandrino discrepare; alios etiam Codices ali-
quarum S. Scripturæ partium satis antiquos, nunc
cum eorum aliquo, nunc cum nullo, convenire. Optime
igitur fecerit, qui Codices omnes MSS cum editis
diligenter contulerit, qui varias lectiones non tantum
ad Hebraicam veritatem examinaverit, sed cum anti-
quissimorum Judæorum Philonis et Josephi, et vetus-
tissimorum Patrum scriptis comparaverit, ac denique
expositiones eas, quæ apud lexicographos scripturarios
etiamnum exstant, vel potius delitescunt, inspicerit,
atque ita nobis editionem LXX maxime puram ador-
naverit. Quale opus utinam aliquando vir doctissi-
mus Isaacus Vossius, qui optime potest, perficeret
ederetque.

THE

H E L P O F W O M E N

IN

ENGLISH PARISHES.

BY THE WRITER OF THE ARTICLE "DEACONESES," IN THE QUARTERLY REVIEW,
OCT^{RB}. 1860.

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THE
HELP OF WOMEN
IN
ENGLISH PARISHES.

THE time seems to be come when a want in our Church System, which used to be unnoticed or only dimly perceived, is now very sensibly felt ; and when, moreover, the want, so perceived and felt, is likely to be gradually supplied. The need of a more systematic female agency than any which we have yet possessed, is now a subject of general conversation. Nor is the question merely talked about as one of real importance ; but it is already put to the test of practical experiment. An improved organization of women's work is in progress in many places and under various modes. More, in fact, has been done in this way since 1850 than in the preceding half-century. It becomes a matter of serious moment, that whatever is done in this direction should be well considered and wisely guided. Are we to check this new movement (for such it may truly be called), or are we to develope and regulate it ? and what form ought it to take in the Church of England ? Such questions as these deserve very careful answering.

The agency, to which attention is here invited, is what may be called, for want of a better term, *professional* female agency. Women set apart to charitable and religious work as the business of their lives are the agents to which allusion is made. A stated and continuous work, not in opposition to the admirable volunteer work, which is already abundant in good fruit, but in addition to that, and, as we shall see, strengthening and encouraging it, is now very generally felt to be desirable. The "Bible Woman" is the first and most obvious illustration.* She gives her whole time to her appointed occupation, as truly and as systematically as the "Scripture Reader." This, however, is to

* The great value of the 'Missing Link' (Nisbet) is that it represents not a theory, but a fact, and that no one can accuse it of any association, direct or indirect, with Romanism. This book has done wonders in breaking down prejudice, and encouraging those who for years had been convinced of the importance of a systematic female diaconate.

be carefully borne in mind—that the female ministers whom we want are not women of the lowest rank only, or of any one rank, but of all ranks, each in its suitable place, as Divine Providence and Divine Grace may give opportunity and impulse. The power of free adaptation is, in this case, peculiarly important. And this remark tends to exclude from our definition the Sisterhoods of the conventional type, which are not suited for free parochial working, as they are certainly not in harmony with the convictions and preferences of the English People. What is here spoken of is rather an “office” than an “order;” but still it is an office as opposed to desultory and fitful exertions.

There could be no harm in establishing such an agency, though no hint were given in Scripture of anything of the kind. If it has its basis in a true moral and spiritual want of the times, this is a sufficient justification. And some would prefer to argue the point on this ground alone. Yet it is not unimportant to notice that we can argue it on the ground of ancient precedent, as well as on that of modern necessity,—that the proposed solution of one of our pressing social problems is historically, as well as theoretically, right.

Some are of opinion that there is very little in the New Testament which has a practical bearing on this subject. The writer of this paper takes a different view. And it seems to him that those who are acquainted with commentaries cannot fail to have noticed a progress in interpretation parallel with and equal to the progress which has taken place in the practical increase of female ministration.* Perhaps those who are predisposed towards the subject see too much in the Bible in favour of it; those whose predisposition is against it, too little. This difference of opinion is likely to promote very useful discussions.† Meanwhile, we may say without reproof that even the hints of Scripture arrest the attention of a devout and reverent mind; while it is cheerfully conceded that there is nothing in the Word of God to fetter and bind us here, but that we are left very free to make our arrangements according to the exigencies of the times.

But again, the Apostolic organization of the Church cannot wisely be dissevered, in such reasonings, from that which immediately succeeded it. Such rude separation is not the habit of

* It is enough here to refer to Alford, Ellicott, and Wordsworth, and to such texts as Acts xvi. 14, 15, 40, xxi. 9; Rom. xvi. 1 and 6-15; Phil. iv. 2, 3; 1 Tim. v. 9; Tit. ii. 3; and especially 1 Tim. iii. 11, rightly understood, *i. e.* as referring to, not women in general, nor the wives of the deacons, but female deacons.

† Even in Germany, where the Deaconess Idea has taken a strong hold of the Protestant mind, thoughtful men are by no means unanimous as to the degree in which the modern female diaconate should be viewed as a reproduction of an Apostolical institution, or as a new organization arising out of present wants and allowed by Scripture.

the Church of England. There is no doubt that deaconesses, or female deacons, did exist in primitive times side by side with those deacons of the other sex, who ministered in subordination to the regularly ordained clergy. And the very circumstances of the decay of this female diaconate are such as to furnish an argument for its restoration in the same or a modified form, if, as seems most probable, it gave way before the growth of sacerdotal jealousy, and was extinguished or absorbed by the strictly-constituted Religious Orders.

If the decay of the primitive institution of Deaconesses may be used as an argument in favour of official female ministration in England, so may the renewal of the institution on the Continent, marked as it is by gradual growth, great success, increasing confidence, and, above all, by a truly religious spirit and by unequivocal Protestantism.* In England the popular idea of German Deaconesses is merely a vague notion of a single local institution at Kaiserswerth, on the Rhine. But this institution itself, varied and extensive as it is, is merely the parent stem of a vast number of offshoots, growing up and flourishing in various parts of Europe, and even in Mahomedan countries.† And besides Kaiserswerth, and quite independent of it, there are about a score of different "Mother-Houses." Nor are these limited to Germany, but they are found in Switzerland, France, Holland, and Sweden. Nor, again, are these establishments of one uniform and monotonous type. On the contrary, they present considerable varieties of organization and method.

In a short paper written with an exclusively practical aim, it seems desirable in the first place to bring definitely into view some of the arguments in favour of an agency of this kind, and then to make such suggestions as may be of some service towards its establishment. The questions which first arise are mainly these : What can a Woman do, in religious and charitable work, which a Man cannot do ? And if there is a distinct field of female employment, why is it not enough that women should labour in it, while living at home in their families, and in conjunction with their domestic duties ?

Now, in the first place, if the Woman's work in the cause of religious and social improvement were the same as the Man's work,—if there were no distinct province of proper feminine ministration,—it would still be an obvious truth that the woman may succeed where the man has failed, as *vice versa* it is true that

* Here it ought to be added, in modification of the preceding note, that the primitive idea, as well as the sense of existing need, seems to have been present throughout, and quite independently, in all the separate founders of Deaconess Institutions.

† The most recent English notice of this Institution is in 'Good Words,' for February and March, 1861.

the latter often succeeds where the former fails. It is not the mere doing of certain things, but the exercise of a beneficial influence, which is the point under consideration : and whatever may be said of the strong exertions of the rougher sex, it will hardly be contended that in persuasive influence the gentler sex is weaker than the other. Let it be remembered, too, that of all influences for good over the families of the poor, few are more likely to be useful than such as are exerted through the children. And then let the peculiar opportunities which female visitors have be considered. "Through a large portion of the day the poor man's house is a woman's house and a children's house." A woman will often be welcome there, when a man's presence would be an intrusion and a hindrance. Nor is this by any means the whole of the case. There is a law of contrast as well as a law of harmony in the mutual service of the two sexes. Women will often persuade men, when men have failed to do so. The mission of woman to man is perhaps hardly yet fully understood amongst us : but it would be easy to give good illustrations of it from books which have recently been published.*

Few thoughtful persons, however, will deny that women have a distinct field of their own, and that both in temporal and spiritual things. And this must be recollected also, that the spiritual opportunity grows out of the temporal. Of Christianly-minded women it is especially true that they are able, while caring for the body, to bring blessings to the soul. This may be briefly, but very emphatically, pointed out in four points of view.

(1.) In the case of nursing the sick, no man would venture to offer himself in competition, or to invade the woman's province. And how much does this province include ! All feel their need of health. The nurse is always welcome to the sick. Few are sensible of their spiritual needs, especially in the time of prosperity. What an opportunity has the Christian nurse ! She is present when others would be intruders. She stands "by the well of water." She can watch for the moments when spiritual medicines are most fitly administered. And yet how utterly destitute are large masses of the population of such help at the times of need ! Among the poor generally, mothers of families have no notion of doing what an educated woman with some experience of nursing would do as a matter of course. What a difference would it make, both in spiritual and temporal things, both in town and country,† if at times of sickness a woman were

* 'English Hearts and Hands' (Nisbet) has long been well known ; 'Haste to the Rescue' (Nisbet) is more recent. Another book, still more recent, entitled 'Ploughing and Sowing' (Mozley), describes a remarkable work of the same kind in a different field.

† Let the reader see what Southey said long ago in his 'Colloquies' (vol. ii. pp. 430, 431) of the sufferings of the poor in country districts during times of sick-

always present, with a mind to understand medical directions, and a heart to use her opportunities for religious good ! *

(2.) Another branch of strictly feminine work, not always so distinctly perceived as the other, but hardly less important, is connected with the watching over girls of the poorer ranks at the most critical and dangerous period of their lives, viz., when they are just going to service or just gone to service. From this source are recruited two very different classes of society,—on the one hand, the most criminal and miserable, the most destructive of all that is involved in the word Home,—on the other hand, one of the most useful of all classes, one that can contribute to an untold extent towards the happiness of the higher ranks ; and the results will greatly depend on the feminine influence which has been exerted at the point where the two paths diverge. Nor is this view limited to the case of those who are destined for domestic service. Female agency may surely be of the utmost value to the clergyman, in regard to the majority of those girls among the poor, who are just confirmed or preparing for confirmation. Here it is that the Protestant Deaconesses of the Continent find one of their most useful spheres of labour.† In addition to this general reference to parochial experience, it is enough here to mention our Workhouses, to indicate perhaps the greatest of all opportunities for feminine tact and perseverance on behalf of girls or young women.‡

ness, of the imperfect medical attention which is all they can obtain, and of the benefit which would arise from the distribution through our rural parishes of women at once “animated with religion” and trained to “recognise and relieve the common kinds of illness.”

* Miss Nightingale’s ‘Notes on Nursing, for the Labouring Classes’ (Harrison), in one sense an abridgment, in another an enlargement, of her fuller work, was just published when this pamphlet was going to press. This is not the place to do more than mention the system of training which is connected with her honoured name, and now begun at St. Thomas’s Hospital. Nor is it possible to make more than a reference to King’s College Hospital, in its union with St. John’s House, to the Devonshire Square Institution of Nursing Sisters, and to the Liverpool Institution for the Training and Employment of Nurses. In this latter town, also, the experiment of district or missionary nursing has been successfully begun. A letter just received leads the writer to add that the “Redcar Home for Convalescent Poor” and the new buildings of the “Middlesbrough Cottage Hospital” have now been opened. These institutions are both “on the principle of Woman’s devotion to God and the poor,” and therefore must be “claimed as a gain on our side.”

† Besides what relates to Servants’ Schools and Servants’ Homes, the work of the deaconesses on Sundays among girls engaged in factories should especially be noticed. Here it is a pleasure to mention the “Preventive Branch” of the excellent “Bristol Female Mission.” Its purpose is to rescue young girls under 18 years of age before they are drawn into paths of vice. Besides definite arrangements for procuring them places, these girls have “a kind motherly friend, who sees after them in their places.”

‡ Here must be particularly mentioned two new Institutions, one in the metropolis, the other in the country : the Industrial Home for Young Women, in connection with the Workhouse Visiting Society, and the Brockham Home and

(3.) A natural but painful transition takes us here to another part of the philanthropic field, where only women are likely to be successful. The truth is beginning to be more and more recognised, that "the lowest and most degraded are only to be rescued by the purest and best and most devoted of their sex." And the allusion here is, not to Penitentiaries and Prisons, though it is female service which is most useful to female inmates even of the latter, but rather to diffused work for the rescue of individuals, and especially on behalf of those who have left Penitentiaries and Prisons.* The Deaconess Institutions of Kaiserswerth and Paris began with the sense of the need of some superintendence of discharged female criminals. The words of a devoted gaol-chaplain in England could here be quoted, who laments that his efforts constantly fail for want of some provision of this kind. And how weak those are who leave penitentiaries need not be stated. They are generally sent out with more fear than hope, and the fear is too often realised.

(4.) We come, in the last place, to the homes of the poor themselves. Here it seems quite enough to ask these three questions:—How are we to raise the degraded classes without raising their homes? how are we to raise the homes, unless we raise the mothers? and how are we to raise the mothers except by female agency? †

But it may be said—admitting all this, why should we not go on as we have gone on for the last fifty years? Why should this female agency be professional? Why is it not enough that it should be occasional, and in combination with home duties? Mrs. Hannah More said, "Charity is the calling of a lady; the care of the poor is her profession." Why will not this principle, carried practically into action, cover all our requirements?

The first answer to these questions is, that the principle is true only in a modified sense. With married ladies and with many unmarried ladies the home duties are primary; the duties to the poor are only secondary. If the two come into collision, the latter must give way. Thus (assuming ladies in general to be practically sensible, which they are not, of both classes of duties) the former are, through natural causes, discharged continuously, the latter cannot be without some special provision for the purpose. Motherly and sisterly care cannot effectually be given to the

Industrial Training School. An account of the former will be found in the 'Journal of the Workhouse Visiting Society' (Longmans), No. xiii., May, 1861. The characteristics of the latter are described in a little book entitled 'The Workhouse Orphan' (Hatchard).

* The Third Annual Report of the "Female Mission to the Fallen," in connexion with the Reformatory and Refuge Union, is now published.

† This seems the right place to mention a well-known book, 'Ragged Homes, and how to mend them' (Nisbet).

miserable and degraded classes through the mere superfluity of time and sympathy which is at the disposal of the higher classes. No one, indeed, who knows anything of the manifold blessings arising from good District Visiting, will be so foolish as to speak lightly of them ; but no one who has had experience of the best District Visiting is ignorant of its difficulties and deficiencies. To take an obvious illustration,—a pestilential fever will often withdraw (and that as an imperative duty to others) all personal help at the time when it is most urgently needed. What is wanted at such times is a woman of religious character and competent education, whose duty is to be at that post. And at all times the value of skilled labour is not to be despised, even in the operations of that charity which springs from the heart.* We have long had trained schoolmistresses, and we are now beginning to have trained nurses : all that is here urged is that we should proceed further in the same direction.

These remarks would be true always, and in reference to all kinds of parishes ; but in our own day the growth of large towns and manufacturing villages has brought about a separation of rich and poor, which threatens the most serious consequences unless some remedies are speedily and wisely applied. “The work is in one place, the workers in another.” The misery which invites the influence of Christian refinement and Christian sympathy is in crowded and dismal streets ; the refinement is in green suburbs ; and the sympathy, shut out from the misery, withers into unthinking indifference. Let this state of things be patiently considered in detail, and its evils must be seriously felt. The pursuits themselves of those towns and villages which we are describing may suggest an illustration of what one of the remedies ought to be.† What is usually done, when some obstacle needing the exertion of force is in one place, and when the motive power is in another place ? Some intermediate machinery is introduced to bring the force into contact with, so as practically to bear upon, the difficulty. Such an intermediate machinery would be the establishment, throughout our poor and populous parishes, of a systematic female diaconate.

But a further argument in favour of the plan may be drawn from the present position of the clergy in reference to the laity. Thoughtful men in the Church are painfully aware of

* It is sometimes said that charity, as coming from the heart, is independent of organization. Every Committee proves the contrary. One purpose, however, of this paper is to protest against our bondage to Committees and Secretaries, Reports and Appeals, Printing and Advertising.

† It may be allowed here to refer to an article, by the writer of this paper, on “Sunday Schools and Deaconesses,” in the ‘Christian Observer’ for December, 1858, where the consequences of this separation of rich and poor are exhibited in one point of view.

a growing disproportion of agency to work. The difficulty of obtaining curates is notorious. The reluctance to enter the Sacred Ministry seems greater than it used to be. To inquire into all the causes of this state of things would exceed the narrow limits which must here be strictly observed. There may be more conscientiousness than formerly—there may be more worldliness; the lucrative employments held out by business must certainly be attractive; the uneasy scruples of a sceptical age are probably operating in many minds. And such causes may be combined in various proportions. Even taking the last cause by itself, and assuming the prevalent scepticism to be very serious, it is worth observing that the quiet religious work of women has always been a powerful counteraction of the inroads of unbelief. But, putting this aside, it is certain that the pressure on the clergy is extreme. Their time for study is reduced to shreds. Manifold occupations, not strictly ministerial, are forced upon them.* The time seems to be come when the clerical order needs a strong reinforcement of lay help; and no lay help is likely to be so precious and powerful as that of women. What kind of assistance from men would be most valuable cannot be discussed here; but it may be questioned whether any conceivable number of Curates, Scripture-Readers, and Schoolmasters would really meet our wants so well as a copious supply and systematic distribution of female labourers.

Here it is assumed that this female labour is to be combined with all the rest of parochial machinery. In fact, throughout this paper it is distinctly contemplated as subsidiary to the Clergyman's work.† It will be conceded by all that these feminine ministrations must be definitely localised, if they are to be effectual. It may also be fairly contended that they are peculiarly adapted to the parochial system. A Deaconess is more likely to be stationary than a Deacon. Moreover what the Clergyman wants is the systematic help of women in reference to his own sick parishioners, his own schools, and all the half-religious, half-secular details of his complicated work.‡ Inharmonious agencies within the same territorial limits have a serious tendency to waste

* This position of the clergy is briefly but forcibly described in a recent number of the 'Literary Churchman.' The article was on the subject of Deaconesses.

† No one will conclude, from the title or the contents of this pamphlet, that any doubt is implied of the singular value of professional female ministrations in institutions as well as parishes. This note gives the opportunity of mentioning a recent circular relating to the establishment in London of a "Nursing Home," on the model of Kaiserswerth, under the care of resident ladies, for patients in consumption and others, and involving also arrangements for parochial visitation.

‡ The institution of the "Parochial Mission Women" in London must not be overlooked. The first report is noticed in the 'Guardian' of February 20th, 1861, where it is said that "the scheme appears to contain the conditions of a great success."

one another, to cause misunderstandings, and to give occasions for imposture. Nor do these principles imply any hostility to Dissenters.* The religious Dissenters are not hostile to the Church, even where they conscientiously differ from it. Many Nonconformists are such merely from habit, or because the Church has failed in its duty to them. In one neglected part of London a poor woman was asked by a female-agent, the first spiritual messenger of the Church who had ever visited her, why she went to chapel: and her answer was, "I only want to go where I can be told that the blood of Jesus Christ cleaneth us from all sin."

Assuming that these views are reasonable, assuming that the want is real, and that the work of women is the proper means for supplying the want, the next practical question which arises is this—"What are we to do?" Probably the best answer to this is that we ought to do just what we are doing now, but with more definite views, with closer attention, and with more earnestness of purpose. Six simple suggestions occur to the writer as worthy of especial notice.

(1.) A serious and calm *attention* ought to be given to the subject. Every clergyman is bound to consider it candidly—to be willing to learn what may be suggested concerning it from any quarter—to look at it well from all sides. Some watchfulness is required here against the unworthy motives to which even good men are exposed in the midst of their useful work. Perhaps there is no question in connection with which it is more necessary to deprecate that hostility which arises from the impression of novelty, or from vague suspicion, or from the habit of controversy. The subject is really too serious for what Dean Milner used to call "nibbling altercation." That prejudices should subside immediately is not to be expected, not even to be wished. But those who are not convinced should be slow to hinder those who are. Some persons are under a great temptation to oppose what they themselves are not prepared to carry into effect.

(2.) But again, among those who are prepared to move in this direction, there ought to be great *forbearance* with one another. There may be various modes of doing the same thing, and this very variety may be expected to result in greater store of experience. This is peculiarly a subject with regard to which those who agree in principle may differ in detail. To say that a poor

* Nor would it be right to omit a special mention of the efforts of Nonconformists in this matter of female ministry. The writer has now before him the excellent rules of the "Leeds Ladies' Household Mission" and an interesting report of the "Female Home Mission" in connection with Great George Street Chapel, Liverpool. These Missions are on the "Bible-woman" principle. So also is the "Liverpool Ladies' Bible and Domestic Mission," which began on a mixed basis, but seems now to have a tendency to combination with Church parochial work. Efforts in the same town on a distinctly parochial basis are mentioned below.

woman cannot work effectually among the poor would be a mischievous mistake. To say that none but the poor can work effectually among the poor would be a mistake still more mischievous. Some would lay chief stress on institutions for training female agents; others would entirely dispense with them. What arrangements are best for the religious life of these ministering women, what rules and regulations for the direction of their work, what scale and mode of payment, are questions admitting of great variety of opinion. Again, the precise method of the clergyman's superintendence is not a matter that can be immediately settled to the satisfaction of all. This, indeed, may probably be said with confidence (and it is the more important to say it after what has been urged above concerning parochial organization)—that if it is hardly proper for superintending ladies (in the Church of England) to conduct female missions without some co-operation with the clergyman, it is unwise in any clergyman to undertake such superintendence without availing himself of the help of those ladies whose experience and tact can be laid under contribution.

(3.) But careful reflection will show that, in order to secure success, certain things must be carefully avoided. *Prudence* is quite as necessary as forbearance. Needlessly to offend prejudices is inexcusable; and such needless offence may be given by undue stress on peculiar forms, on peculiar phraseology, on costume, or mere outward rules. Prejudices may seem to us very foolish, may make us very impatient: but it is better to succeed in an enterprise at a point below our ideal, than to shipwreck a good cause on an obstinate resistance.

(4.) Again, though this is not a matter admitting of procrastination, it does require *patience*. In an enterprise of this kind many questions are raised which can only be settled by experience. A practical problem must be solved by practice. We must begin experimentally, and be guided by the results. A system of English Deaconess-work, if it is to live, must grow like a tree, not be artificially built on an arbitrary plan. Moreover, it must be indigenous, not exotic. Our business is not to copy, but to learn. What has succeeded elsewhere will not necessarily succeed here in the same form. The success of transplanting a full-grown tree is always precarious.

(5.) At the same time, without *experiment* there can be no patience. To wait till our theory is perfect, is to wait till the sufferings of the poor have deepened into utter misery, and till successive streams of sinners have flowed into eternity. Patience without enthusiasm does not deserve the name of faith. The true course is to begin to do a little imperfectly, that we may learn how to do much and to do it more perfectly. We must not

expect to accomplish at first what is ultimately found to be the best. It is one thing to reach an ideal, and another to make a practical and useful beginning.

(6.) One thing more seems to be very needful, viz., that much *conference* should take place among those who are really in earnest on this question. The interchange of thought on a subject involving so many details would be peculiarly serviceable, both in promoting sympathy and preventing mistakes. The interchange of experience would be of still greater service. Each town, each parish, could learn much from other towns and other parishes.* Few things perhaps would be more useful than a collection of instances in which the experiment of official female agency has been tried, with the history not only of success but of failure.

If such a course of proceedings is pursued among us in a Christian spirit, our progress may be expected to be as follows:— Here and there, in this parish and that, clergymen will be deeply impressed with the need of official female ministration. On the other hand, women of various ranks will be found, in many places, who long thus to minister. The former will seek for such women to serve with them as in disposition or social grade seem most nearly to meet their requirements; the latter will be drawn to those parishes where they discover a real sympathy with their aspirations. A lady^o (perhaps a clergyman's widow or orphan daughter) will take a cottage and pursue the work in which she has already had some experience. Those who have had less experience will seek for practical teaching under those who are already at work. Perhaps two or three such ministering women may combine in some residence well chosen for Christian efforts among the poor.[†] Perhaps a gentlewoman of high education and devoted character may superintend some of her sisters, more lowly but not less devoted than herself. The circumstances are very various under which "Homes" may be established, where resident "Lady Missionaries" or "Lady Superintendents" may supply a centre for a wide circle of operations.[‡] Many of these experiments may

* While these pages were passing through the press, communications were received from the populous part of Staffordshire and from a rural district in Wiltshire. Of the former it was observed that the poor are remarkably kind in nursing one another during sickness, while the influence of educated gentlewomen is utterly absent; of the latter, that the District Visitors are very efficient, but that Nursing Sisters are much needed. Such contrasts are full of instruction.

† See what is said by the author of 'My Life, and what am I to do with It?' on ladies choosing their abode (when they are free to choose it) with a view to usefulness rather than to pleasant society, good shops, and the like, p. 60. In a review of this book in the 'Record' (Nov. 23rd, 1860), it is truly said that the "stern realities of life call forth the latent tenderness and tact which distinguish the gentler sex."

‡ The writer has wished, throughout this paper, to illustrate his positions, so far as he could, by actual examples. Two recent London circulars enable him to do this here: one issued by the "United Association for the Christian and Do-

be temporary at first ; and some will fail ; but some will succeed. The consequences are not doubtful. Opportunities for usefulness will multiply. The sewing-school, the sick-room, the mothers' meeting, the provident society, will all be found occasions for spiritual benefit. Hearts will be touched that were hardened before. Gratitude for miserable homes made happy will prepare the way for higher blessings. Attendance on Divine Worship, the study of Scripture, the practice of Family Prayer, will increase. Each such case of successful ministration will be an example and an encouragement. Correspondence will spring up between one parish and another, and experience will grow.*

Thus scattered attempts will ripen slowly into a system. Those who were timid before will take courage from what has succeeded. The more impetuous will be taught sobriety by difficulties and disappointments. Party spirit will be diminished, suspicions will be allayed, in the presence of whatever good has been accomplished. Moreover, the true relation will be discovered between the practical work of the Deaconess and the institution for training Deaconesses. Those who have begun with establishing Institutions † will be all the wiser for knowing the practical needs of parishes. Those who are engaged in the scattered fields of parochial labour will perhaps begin to feel the need of training. How is that medical knowledge to be had which is so important an accessory to a woman's spiritual work ? . This question is only a specimen of many. The experience which suggests the questions will probably by degrees find the answers.

In proportion as all this is realised, many good results may be expected over and above those which have already been indicated. One great result is this—that a parish with a Deaconess has always

mestic Improvement of Young Women," under the presidency of Lord Shaftesbury ; the other, describing a plan for "District Visiting in Shoreditch," set on foot by Mr. H. Kingscote and others. The former contemplates the establishment of "Homes," in each of which a "Lady Missionary" is to reside, aided and directed by Volunteer Ladies. One feature of the latter is to place five or six ladies, without salary, in a small house, under a "Lady Superintendent." It may be laid down as a rule, that in the arrangement of systematic female ministration a central house or room is important. This is a marked characteristic of the continental Deaconess work.

* These details are not imaginary, but suggested by practical observation and inquiry. One source of information is a successful experiment, on a strictly parochial basis, in connexion with St. John's Church, Liverpool ; nor is this the only one in the same town.

† Three Institutions for training female agents, and for giving a centre to scattered operations, are begun and in progress : one near Plymouth, described by the Rev. R. J. Hayne in his pamphlet on 'Church Deaconesses' (J. H. Parker) ; one founded at Barnet under the direction of the Rev. W. Pennefather, and described in a recent number of the 'Record' ; and one in the midst of the iron-working population of West Bromwich, near Birmingham. The last of these has been mentioned to the writer by the Rev. J. P. Norris, H. M. Inspector of Schools, who would give further information to any who might desire it.

a certain amount of district visiting which is not liable to interruption. The clergyman has some feminine help on which he can rely. This help, too, is practised help. Moreover, it is not only substantial aid in itself, but it is a fixed centre, which gives strength and definite organization to the looser operations of those volunteers who are not officially responsible.

And here already is indicated another result of the utmost value. The official work will bring out voluntary work that did not exist before, and give new life and encouragement to that which did exist. Some have an impression that the contrary result would follow—that official labours would paralyse and replace the voluntary. This would indeed be a disastrous change. But theoretically this is very improbable, and all experience tends the other way.* Good work in progress attracts, not repels, those who are in sympathy with it. A clergyman fixed in a parish does not diminish voluntary exertion, but develops it, and all the more in proportion as he labours locally and pastorally. The stated work both stimulates and organizes the other. This is still more likely to be the case with women's work : for a woman is a centre of sympathy more than a man can ever be. The Deaconess would draw into the habit of self-denying exertion many ladies, who hitherto have only acted occasionally, or wished to know how to begin. Good intentions are abundant ; but method and encouragement are wanting. A fixed system of well-considered female agency would bring down this misty atmosphere of good intentions in showers of blessing on all our parishes.

This, too, is to be very particularly noticed,—that a system of this kind gives a place of work to the timid and retiring, as well as to the more daring and energetic. It is sometimes said that the philanthropic exertions of women, if they are worth anything, must be the result of spontaneous enterprise. This might be partially true, if it were impossible to add an official element to the voluntary. But by this addition we provide opportunities and facilities for those who follow as well as for those who originate ; and the women who work most happily under guidance are perhaps by no means the least useful.

Here too is a partial answer to the objection which is often made, that, though the plan be good, the right women will never be found. It is hardly likely that the best of our women will be

* The recent work of the Bible-Women in London and elsewhere has brought out into activity many volunteers who did little or nothing before, and to those who laboured willingly it has given new interest in the poor, and new knowledge of their sufferings and trials and of the best modes of doing them good. Similar has been the much longer and more varied experience in Switzerland and Germany. Deaconess-work, well established, always gathers round it an energetic committee of cheerful lady Helpers.

very forward to take a new position, till that position has been recognised by public opinion. But let the occupation of this diaconate become so far customary as to be sheltered from criticism, and let support throughout life be guaranteed to those who are destitute of pecuniary means,—and candidates will not be wanting. It ought not to be forgotten that there is an industrial side to this question. In 1851 the adult women in England were half a million in excess of the adults of the other sex. Has God made a mistake in the law of population, or do we make a mistake in not acting on the hint which He gives us? Some foolish things have perhaps been said concerning the competition of male and female labour. Still it is true that new vocations, directly or indirectly remunerated, are much needed for many of our women;* and in regard to the occupation here described, there can be no feminine intrusion into the other sphere. No doubt only a limited number of women are fit for this occupation. But suppose one-fiftieth part of the half-million were seriously engaged in it. How great would be the gain of our parishes, and how many would have found a life full of usefulness and happiness!

What has just been said must be emphatically repeated. It is not every woman who is fit for this kind of service. It is the service of Him who gave Himself for us, and who came that He might serve. It is service, for His sake, on behalf of the meanest and most sinful. It is only in devotion to Him that such service can be found. The first deaconesses were at the foot of the Cross.†

* Among many other Essays on this subject, we may refer especially to the 'Edinburgh Review' for April, 1859, and to articles in the 'Times' of November 1st and November 2nd, 1860.

† Matt. xxvii. 55, 56; Mark, xv. 40, 41; see Luke, viii. 3. The same Greek word is used in Matt. viii. 15, xx. 26-28; Mark ix. 35. It would be interesting and instructive to trace the usage of this word carefully through the New Testament. See, for instance, Rom. xv. 31; 2 Cor. ix. 12. In the English Version the words "minister," "servant," "service," hide some things which are expressive in the original.





